

INVESTMENT-READY DESTINATION

Jammu & Kashmir is undergoing a transformative shift aimed at establishing the Union Territory as an investment-ready, business-friendly, and economically vibrant destination. With a strategic focus on infrastructure, governance reforms, private-sector engagement, and improved security conditions, J&K is steadily positioning itself as a promising hub for industries, tourism, and innovation.

Over the past few years, the Government of India and the UT administration have worked in mission mode to create an enabling environment that encourages investors to explore the region's immense potential. A major milestone in this direction has been the implementation of a transparent and investor-oriented New Industrial Policy (2021-30). The policy offers a wide range of incentives, including capital investment subsidies, GST reimbursements, land allotment through a single-window portal, and support for logistics and export-oriented units. This has given a strong push to new projects across sectors such as food processing, renewable energy, textiles, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing.

Simultaneously, the government has prioritised reforms in land, power, taxation, and ease-of-doing-business norms. Digitisation of land records, automated building permissions, online grievance redressal systems, and simplified labour compliance mechanisms have boosted investor confidence. The establishment of dedicated industrial estates in Samba, Kathua, Bari Brahmana, Lassipora, and Budgam, as well as new industrial nodes under the PM Gati Shakti plan, underline the administration's commitment to creating world-class industrial zones.

Security conditions in the UT have also improved significantly, contributing to a stable environment necessary for long-term investments. Enhanced law-and-order arrangements, community-centric policing, and a focus on youth engagement through skill development and entrepreneurship initiatives have helped create a climate of confidence among investors and local communities alike.

Tourism-a natural strength of J&K-has experienced record growth, with new destinations such as Bhaderwah, Lolab, Kupwara, Gurez, Basohli, and Patnitop gaining traction. This surge is complemented by massive investments in hospitality infrastructure, eco-tourism projects, homestay schemes, and adventure tourism circuits. The administration aims to convert J&K into a year-round global tourism destination, opening vast avenues for private sector participation.

At the same time, the UT is keen to strengthen MSMEs, promote rural entrepreneurship, and encourage youth-led startups. Incubation centres at universities, incentives under Startup Policy-2024, and collaborations with national industry bodies are fostering a dynamic ecosystem for innovation.

Through sustained policy reforms, improved infrastructure, and a conducive socio-economic environment, Jammu & Kashmir is confidently moving towards becoming a competitive, investor-ready destination. The collaborative efforts of the government, industry, and local communities are setting the stage for a future where J&K emerges as a leading centre for growth, investment, and opportunity in the northern region of India.

J&K strengthens safety measures as families seek relief from stray dog threat

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF



In response to the mounting concerns over the growing stray dog population and its impact on public safety, the Government of Jammu & Kashmir has issued a detailed order on the constitution of committees at both the Union Territory and district levels. The subject of the order-linked to the Supreme Court's ongoing *Suo Moto Writ Petition* concerning the issue of children being endangered by stray dogs-reflects the urgency and seriousness with which the administration is now approaching this persistent civic challenge.

The move comes at a time when Jammu & Kashmir, particularly its urban centres such as Srinagar and Jammu, has been witnessing significant public anxiety over rising stray dog attacks. Over the past few years, thousands of bite cases have been recorded, placing immense pressure on healthcare systems and heightening fears among parents, students, morning walkers, and commuters. Public spaces such as schools, hospitals, playgrounds, markets, transport hubs, and residential colonies have increasingly reported the presence of aggressive dog packs, prompting widespread calls for administrative intervention.

Against this backdrop, the Supreme Court of India issued fresh directions earlier in November 2025, urging states and Union Territories to create robust mechanisms for controlling stray dog populations through humane and scientifically proven methods. The directions emphasised sterilisation, vaccination, responsible waste management, and strengthened institutional safety measures. The J&K administration has now formalised a comprehensive governance structure to ensure effective implementation of these guidelines in every district.

At the apex of this framework is the Union Territory-level committee comprising senior bureaucrats from crucial sectors including Agriculture, Housing & Urban Development, Health, Education, Public Works, Home, Sports, Rural Development, Transport, and Law. Administratively powerful bodies such as the Divisional Commissioners, Municipal

Commissioners, Inspector Generals of Police, the Transport Commissioner, and representatives from national institutions like NHAI and the Animal Welfare Board of India have also been integrated into the structure, signalling the administration's intention to adopt a whole-of-government approach.

This UT-level committee will function under the coordination of the Housing & Urban Development Department, which has been named the nodal authority responsible for ensuring that all decisions, timelines, and reporting requirements are adhered to. It will monitor the implementation of the Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules, 2023, and ensure that every department contributes efficiently to controlling and managing stray dog populations. Central to its mandate is the responsibility to submit compliance reports to the Supreme Court as per stipulated deadlines.

The operational responsibilities extend far beyond sterilisation and vaccination. The committee is tasked with ensuring that all government and private institutions-specialised schools, hospitals, sports stadia, health centres, and transport nodes-are fully secured against stray dog ingress. This comes in light of increasing incidents across the Valley where children in school compounds and patients outside hospitals have encountered stray dogs due to open boundaries, damaged fencing, or accumulation of waste that attracts animals.

In recent years, Srinagar has witnessed specific hotspots near hospitals, marketplaces, garbage dumping points, and tourist areas. The unchecked food waste generated by eateries, street vendors, and residential clusters has contributed significantly to the creation of stray dog "habitats." The new administrative system aims to systematically eliminate these hotspots, reduce access to food waste, and implement strict vigilance within all public institutions.

Another critical component of the government's strategy involves the designation of nodal officers across departments, institutions, municipalities, and district administrations. These officers will be responsible for maintaining cleanliness, securing premises, coordinating sterilisation drives, recording dog bite cases, and maintaining direct communication with municipal authorities. Their contact details will be displayed at institution

entrances, creating an accountability system that has often been missing in the past.

The Supreme Court has placed strong emphasis on public awareness, and the government order reflects that priority. Awareness programmes are to be conducted frequently in schools, hospitals, and community spaces to educate people-especially children-on safe behaviour around animals, first aid in case of bites, and the importance of timely reporting. This component gains significance in Kashmir where, every year, thousands of bite victims rush to district hospitals or the lone anti-rabies clinic in Srinagar, often without knowledge of best immediate practices.

Another major direction relates to ensuring the uninterrupted availability of anti-rabies vaccines and immunoglobulin in all hospitals. Concerns over occasional shortages have created panic in the past, particularly during peak tourist season when population density increases. The new order mandates that every government and private hospital must maintain sufficient stock at all times.

To ensure implementation at the grassroots level, district-level committees have been formed across every district of Jammu & Kashmir. These committees-headed by the respective Deputy Commissioners-will meet frequently to monitor ground action. In Srinagar and Jammu districts, the involvement of Municipal Commissioners, SSPs, and senior officials from health, education, animal husbandry, public works, and sports departments adds administrative strength to the process. In other districts, similar structures have been created under the leadership of the Deputy Commissioners and Municipal CEOs.

These committees are required to inspect schools, hospitals, bus stands, railway stations, playgrounds, and other public spaces regularly to ensure they remain free of stray dog presence. They must also identify vulnerable points that require fencing, wall repairs, gates, or enhanced security. The committees will oversee the removal of stray dogs from institutional premises, ensuring they are sterilised, vaccinated, shifted to shelters, and not released back into sensitive zones-a key point stressed by the Supreme Court.

Additionally, the order directs the creation of designated feeding spots in every locality and the development of animal shelters with

adequate capacity. This reflects a shift toward more organised and humane management of stray animals, reducing random feeding across streets while ensuring dogs have controlled access to food.

The committees must also collaborate with police, NHAI, and Public Works authorities to monitor highways and ensure that cattle and stray dogs do not disrupt movement on major roads. Highway patrol teams and helplines will function under closer supervision to address any such incidents, reflecting the government's intention to protect both human travellers and animals.

Waste management remains one of the most critical components of the overall mechanism. Srinagar and Jammu, like many growing urban centres in India, struggle with scattered garbage points that attract stray dogs. The order insists that transport hubs, marketplaces, government offices, schools, and hospitals must maintain strict waste-disposal systems. Without proper waste control, even the most rigorous sterilisation programmes cannot reduce stray dog populations effectively.

The committees must also compile monthly progress reports covering sterilisation numbers, vaccination data, sheltering capacity, inspections, awareness drives, and logistical challenges. These reports will feed into the fortnightly UT-level assessments, ultimately shaping the compliance dossier submitted before the Supreme Court.

The government's order represents one of the most comprehensive administrative responses to the stray dog issue in Jammu & Kashmir in recent years. By integrating multiple departments, enforcing accountability, strengthening infrastructure, and adopting a humane yet firm approach, the administration aims to strike a balance between public safety and animal welfare.

As the region continues to urbanise rapidly, the success of this initiative will depend on disciplined waste management, community participation, strong inter-departmental coordination, and consistent monitoring. The coming months will reveal how effectively these newly established committees translate policy into action on the ground, particularly in high-density urban pockets where dog attacks have instilled widespread fear and frustration among citizens.

Empowering Minds, Building Futures: National Education Day

■ BAIKAWAL CHAWALGAMI

National Education Day was commemorated across the expanse of the Indian subcontinent on the eleventh of November, 2025, with resplendent enthusiasm and profound reverence for Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the erudite savant who adorned the office of India's inaugural Minister of Education. Instituted in 2008 by governmental proclamation, this observance epitomizes the nation's homage to Azad's indefatigable exertions in erecting the intellectual and institutional edifice of post-independence India. The day transcends mere ceremonial homage; it becomes a reflective juncture wherein citizens contemplate the epistemic foundations of nation-building and the transformative potency of learning as the sine qua non of societal advancement. The profundity of Azad's influence upon the evolution of Indian pedagogy defies facile encapsulation, for his sagacious initiatives and visionary discernment conferred upon the fledgling republic the infrastructural substratum necessary for educational proliferation and cultural renaissance. National Education Day is celebrated annually to venerate Azad's natal day and to perpetuate his ideological bequest that construed education not as an elitist prerogative but as a universal entitlement indispensable for civic enlightenment and collective emancipation. In the current epoch, educational establishments-ranging from rural schools to metropolitan universities-commemorate the occasion through multifarious

intellectual engagements such as symposia, discourses, debates, expository competitions, and academic colloquia designed to illumine the imperatives of literacy and curricular innovation. The objective is not merely ritualistic celebration but a dialectical engagement with the paradigms of learning that shape the moral and cognitive architecture of the republic.

Azad's tenure from 1947 to 1958 witnessed the inception of foundational institutions such as the University Grants Commission and the Indian Institutes of Technology, emblematic of his conviction that scientific temper and academic rigor must be the twin pillars of a progressive polity. His epistemological philosophy posited education as a vehicle for eradicating parochialism and inculcating intellectual cosmopolitanism, thereby knitting together a pluralistic and enlightened citizenry. Each year, National Education Day assumes a thematic orientation reflective of the prevailing educational imperatives, fostering discourse on pedagogical reform, inclusivity, and lifelong learning. The 2025 observance, consonant with these traditions, invited introspection on India's trajectory towards equitable and technologically adaptive education, though the official theme, unveiled proximate to the date, accentuated student-centric growth and pedagogical innovation. The observance of this day, therefore, is not a mere act of retrospective glorification but a reiteration of Azad's exhortation that learning constitutes the spiritual nucleus of national cohesion and

moral advancement. It accentuates four cardinal dimensions: the monumental contribution of Maulana Azad in architecting India's educational infrastructure; the strides made towards democratizing knowledge; the symbiotic nexus between literacy and national integration; and the empowerment of youth as custodians of civic virtue and social responsibility. Thus, National Education Day emerges as a clarion call urging every stakeholder-educators, legislators, scholars, and students-to reaffirm their fealty to the ideals of enlightenment, equality, and intellectual probity.

Throughout the nation, educational institutions orchestrate erudite gatherings, awareness rallies, and creative contests that galvanize discourse on the epistemological and socio-political significance of learning. From essay-writing tournaments to slogan recitations, from poster exhibitions to rhetorical debates, the festivities encompass a vibrant spectrum of participatory activities designed to rekindle public consciousness regarding the indispensability of education as the crucible of civilization. Awareness rallies permeate urban streets and rural bylanes alike, disseminating the gospel of knowledge and exhorting communities to ensure universal school enrolment. Pedagogical deliberations interrogate the vicissitudes of the Indian education system, its triumphs and tribulations, while exploring the necessity of inclusivity and gender parity in access to learning. In many institutions, quiz competitions delineate

milestones of Indian educational policy, paying homage to seminal reformers and transformative legislations. The proliferation of posters and public displays bearing aphoristic injunctions on the right to education serves as a visual reaffirmation of the state's constitutional commitment to intellectual emancipation. The Ministry of Human Resource Development, rechristened as the Ministry of Education, had in September 2008 solemnly proclaimed the eleventh of November as National Education Day, thereby enshrining Maulana Azad's legacy within the annals of national commemoration. Since then, the day has functioned as a perennial reminder of India's unwavering pledge to the democratization of learning and the pursuit of cognitive equity.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's personal odyssey mirrors the evolution of Indian modernity itself. Born on November 11, 1888, in the holy city of Mecca, into a lineage steeped in theological erudition, he transcended the doctrinaire confines of orthodoxy through an eclectic engagement with Western sciences, philosophy, and literature. This intellectual hybridity engendered in him a vision of education that harmonized the ethical profundity of Eastern wisdom with the empirical rigor of Western inquiry. His journalistic ventures-Al-Hilal (1912) and Al-Balagh-emerged as incendiary instruments of nationalist awakening and ideological consolidation, fortifying the anti-colonial consciousness of the Indian populace. At the precocious age of thirty-five,

Azad ascended to the presidency of the Indian National Congress, symbolizing the confluence of youth, intellect, and patriotism. His political camaraderie with Mahatma Gandhi was emblematic of an ethical synthesis wherein education and liberation were perceived as correlative endeavors-the former nurturing the mind, the latter emancipating the nation. Following independence, as India's first Education Minister, Azad instituted a constellation of reforms predicated upon the belief that intellectual advancement must accompany political sovereignty. He perceived education not as a utilitarian pursuit but as a moral enterprise aimed at cultivating rationality, creativity, and civic conscience. Azad's theoretical orientation was predicated on the conviction that true independence is contingent upon cognitive emancipation; that a nation unlettered in spirit remains shackled in essence. To him, learning was not an ornament of privilege but the lifeblood of democracy. His policies catalyzed the establishment of research institutions, libraries, and universities that would subsequently become the nerve centres of India's knowledge economy. His advocacy for female education and linguistic pluralism underscored a progressive inclusivity far ahead of his epoch. In recognition of his monumental service to the nation, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was posthumously adorned with the Bharat Ratna in 1992-an honorific acknowledgment of his dual legacy as both a freedom fighter and a pedagogical luminary. His intellectual

oeuvre continues to resonate across academic and philosophical discourses, affirming the inextricable link between education and moral civilization.

In 2025, as the nation once again paid tribute to his indomitable spirit, the observance of National Education Day transcended mere formalism; it became an act of civic introspection and intellectual renewal. Students, educators, and communities converged in a collective paean to the ideals of enlightenment and equity. The air was suffused with discourses on the right to education, on the exigencies of technological adaptation, and on the ethical imperatives of inclusivity. The spirit of the day evoked Azad's perennial exhortation-that the destiny of a nation is sculpted not by its armies or wealth, but by the calibre of its classrooms and the integrity of its educators. Thus, National Education Day 2025 was not merely a commemorative occasion but a reaffirmation of a civilizational credo-that education, in its highest conception, is both the architect and custodian of national destiny.

To celebrate Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, therefore, is to pledge allegiance to the perpetual quest for knowledge, to the dismantling of ignorance, and to the ennoblement of humanity through learning. The most befitting tribute to this visionary lies not in transient ceremonies but in the relentless pursuit of his pedagogical ideals-an education system that is inclusive, dynamic, humane, and profoundly transformative.

Bhagwan Birsa Munda and Janjati Hindu warriors

■ ER. RAJESH PATHAK

Martyred to the cause of freedom against British rule, Birsa Munda when went with his parents to seek admission in German Christian mission school at Chaibasa (Jharkhand) to start the study, he was made to adopt Christianity. However, after the completion of education as Birsa came into the contact of then a famous Vaishnav saint, Acharya Anand Pandey, the inborn Hindu sanskaras [virtues] in Birsa gained resurgence again, there of paving the way for him to come back to the fold of Hinduism, becoming Sanyasi or an ascetic ultimately! Inspired by him, the Janjati (schedule tribe) people began to come back to Hindu fold from Christianity. This transformation among the people was taken by missionaries as threat to themselves, and their 'mission'. They conspired

with British Commissioner of Ranchi and got Birsa arrested under false allegations. Though freed from the jail after two years, the tussle between Janjati community led by him and missionaries remained untamed henceforth. And at one point of time it turned into violent clash as British force also joined to eliminate Birsa. Unfortunately, before the rifles, bombs and other modernised weapons the army laced with, Janjati freedom fighters with their traditional weapons could not stay long in the battle. Hundreds of them fell martyred, so were the villages ransacked by the soldiers commanded by brute British officers. Birsa was held shackled and put into the Ranchi jail. Suffering barbarous atrocities, he lastly breathed his last on 9th June, 1900. It is believed that it was the Jail authority that had poisoned Birsa.

With this episode of the contribution of Janjati community in the freedom struggle against British that Krishna Umray of Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad delivered her speech before the audiences in the seminar held in Gayatri Shakti Peeth, Bhopal (MP). The event was organised on the occasion of Janjati Gourav Diwas.

Birsa Munda is notably the first revolutionary to be held by the masses as 'Bhagwan'. Like Birsa Munda, audience in the seminar came to know the inspiring stories of several other great fighters of Janjati communities such as Tilka Manjhi; Punja Bheel associated with Maharana Pratap; Shanker Shah - Raghunath Shah; Rani Kamalapati, the martyrdom of two sons of Guru Bhagat; Mavle community of Sahayadri mountain associated with Chhatrapati Shivaji and likewise.

Present on the occasion also was Shrimati Ranjana Chitale, a learned scholar of repute in the city.

Mentioning Ahilyabai Holkar, she told Hindus, though, liberated the country from Mughal domination, however there aroused yet another threat internally in the form of the loot and plunder caused by the local mercenary class consisting Pathans, Ruhailas and Pindaries. And Malwa was no exception to this, as the villages on the edge of borders of the state began to be evacuated by the inhabitants for the fear of recurrent onslaughts of band of robbers. Ahilyabai, then queen of the region, wanted to marry her daughter. She declared that whoever would protect the villages from the band of dacoits bringing under check the crimes that she would have him marry with her daughter. With the declaration of queen many of the

brave soldiers and others endeavoured upon fulfilling the mission. And one of them was Yashwant Rao Phadse, who was the commander of a platoon.

As we know, along with the warriors of other communities, Chhatrapati Shivaji offered in his army an equal place to tribal community of Mavlay resided in Sahayadri mountain. The renowned commander of Shivaji, Tanahji Malsuray, was the pride of none other than the same Mavlay community. The destruction Afzal Khan and its entire army was the result of strategy drawn by Shivaji, as well as the bravery displayed by the Tanhaji's loyal fighters.

Following the ideal of Shivaji, and on the advice of Yashwant Rao that Ahilyabai chose Bheel tribesmen and nomadic community of Rajasthan for the arm training to permanently contain the terror of

bandits in the far flung areas of kingdom. And the Bheel warriors under the able leadership of Yashwant Rao finally purged the affected villages from the bandits, bringing the everlasting security and peace for the village community. Thus Muktabai, the daughter of Ahilyabai, got to be married with Yashwant Rao Phadse.

At the age of 25 years when a youth not even gets to be able to properly chose the goal of his life, Birsa Munda in the same age succeeded in the burning the flame of freedom in the entire region. So much so that when he was put to prison the people of Maharashtra, Jharkhand and other adjoining regions grew revolted against British administration. This as an end note Tilakraj Dangli, the Regional Head of Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad, at the end of the event said.